Muted Forest

Wonokromo

a sound-photography showcase by Karnivulgar

Footnote:

Historical references in this text are drawn from two academic theses:
- Doni Anggono, “Dinamika Kawasan Wonokromo Tahun 1942-1948” (Universitas Airlangga, 2014).
- Kholis Gurad Deka, “Perkembangan Kebun Binatang Surabaya 1916-1955” (Universitas Airlangga, 2006).
Both documents are publicly accessible via the Universitas Airlangga repository.

Global Forest Watch https://gfw.global/5KGftD

All photographs and sound are taken by Samsung Galaxy A34 5G

System Override: The Architecture of Extraction

An Observation by Karnivulgar

You could call this a forest. Officially, you'd be wrong. The data says Surabaya has zero hectares of natural forest. But inside Kebun Binatang Surabaya, the trees are still there. They've been standing through all of it. They're still standing now.

This place has never been quiet. It just looks that way from a distance.

History isn't a story we tell to feel something. It's a sequence of systems doing what they were built to do. In Wonokromo, those systems kept repeating. The players changed. The architecture didn't.

In 1942, the Japanese invasion wasn't met with resistance – it was met with a prophecy. The Joyoboyo legend had already prepared the ground. The occupation was processed as destiny. One cultural algorithm replaced another. And the physical evidence of that transition – a military bunker, still standing behind the zoo – is a reminder that extraction rarely announces itself as violence. It presents itself as progress.

In 1943, the zoo hosted propaganda performances. Gambang. Ludruk. A group called "Trio," performing sound art for the Japanese administration. At the same time, the zoo's materials were being diverted for the war effort. The animals stayed. The infrastructure went elsewhere.

In 1944, Allied bombs hit the BPM oil refinery. The explosion was visible across Wonokromo. The cloud of fire was photographed from the air. It's still in the archive.

In 1945, Gurkha troops fought Indonesian youth at the Wonokromo bridge. The young fighters didn't win. But they didn't leave either. They stayed in the ground.

Today, the extraction continues. It's just harder to see. It's in bureaucratic static. It's in missing billions. The loop hasn't stopped. Only the variables have changed.

The photographs and field recordings in this room are not illustrations. They are evidence of friction – where urban ecology meets structural ruin. They were taken in one visit. No edits. No retouching. The film was shot in one continuous take. The sound is raw.

This isn't a limitation. It's a position.

Noise is often treated as failure. But noise is not the absence of a signal. It is the sound of the system working exactly as intended.

Muted Forest is not a protest. It is not a documentary. It is a counter-archive. It documents what the data cannot see – and asks what we're willing to hear when the system stops broadcasting.

Kita bisa bilang ini hutan. Secara resmi, itu salah. Data menyebut Surabaya punya nol hektar hutan alami. Akan tetapi, di dalam Kebun Binatang Surabaya, pohon-pohon tua masih berdiri. Mereka sudah melewati semuanya. Mereka masih berdiri sampai sekarang.

Tempat ini tak pernah sunyi. Hanya terlihat seperti itu dari jauh.

Sejarah bukanlah cerita untuk membuat kita merasakan sesuatu. Sejarah adalah rangkaian sistem yang berjalan sesuai dengan desainnya. Di Wonokromo, sistem-sistem itu terus berulang. Pemainnya berganti. Arsitekturnya tidak.

1942. Invasi Jepang tidak dihadapi dengan perlawanan – tapi dengan ramalan. Legenda Joyoboyo sudah menyiapkan jalan. Pendudukan dijalani sebagai takdir. Satu algoritma budaya menggantikan yang lain. Dan bukti fisik dari transisi itu – sebuah bunker militer, masih berdiri di belakang kebun binatang – adalah pengingat bahwa ekstraksi jarang menyatakan dirinya sebagai kekerasan. Ia tampil sebagai kemajuan.

1943. Kebun binatang menjadi panggung propaganda. Gambang. Ludruk. Sebuah grup bernama "Trio," menampilkan seni bunyi untuk administrasi Jepang. Pada saat yang sama, material kebun binatang dialihkan untuk perang. Hewan-hewan tetap tinggal. Infrastruktur pergi ke tempat lain.

1944. Bom Sekutu menghantam kilang minyak BPM. Ledakan terlihat dari seluruh Wonokromo. Awan api diabadikan dari udara. Masih ada di arsip.

1945. Pasukan Gurkha bertempur dengan pemuda Indonesia di jembatan Wonokromo. Para pejuang muda tidak menang. Tapi mereka juga tidak pergi. Mereka tetap di tanah.

Sekarang, ekstraksi berlanjut. Hanya saja lebih sulit dilihat. Ia hidup di dalam birokrasi yang statis. Ia ada di miliaran yang hilang. Lingkarannya tak berhenti. Variabelnya saja yang berubah.

Foto-foto dan field recording di kawasan ini bukanlah ilustrasi. Mereka adalah bukti dari pergesekan – tempat di mana ekologi urban bertemu dengan reruntuhan struktural. Semua diambil dalam satu kunjungan. Tanpa suntingan. Tanpa sentuhan ulang. Film direkam dalam satu take. Suara mentah.

Ini bukan keterbatasan. Ini adalah sikap.

Noise is not the absence of a signal – it is the sound of the system working exactly as intended.

Muted Forest bukan protes. Bukan dokumenter. Ia adalah arsip tandingan. Ia mendokumentasikan apa yang tak bisa dilihat oleh data – dan bertanya apa yang bersedia kita dengar ketika sistem berhenti menyiarkan.

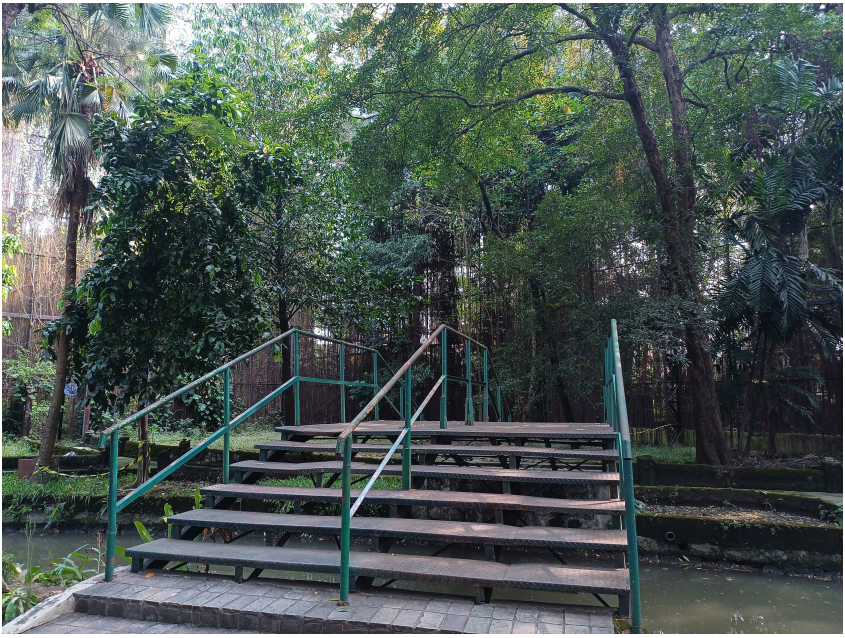
The Diagnose

Kebun Binatang Surabaya

PEMERINTAH KOTA SURABAYA
BANGUNAN CAGAR BUDAYA
SK Walikota Surabaya No. 188.45/ 004 / 402.1/04.1/1998
Tanggal 15 Januari 1998
TOKO SOUVENIR KEBUN BINATANG SURABAYA
JALAN SETAIL NO. 1 SURABAYA
KEBUN BINATANG SURABAYA
(Arsitektur Lingkungan Lansekap)
Tahun 2019

The Ruptures

AWAS
KEMCING
ANAK 2 -2000
DEWASA 2000



The Micro Frequencies

spot foto
menara cinta
lantai 2

The Counter-Archive

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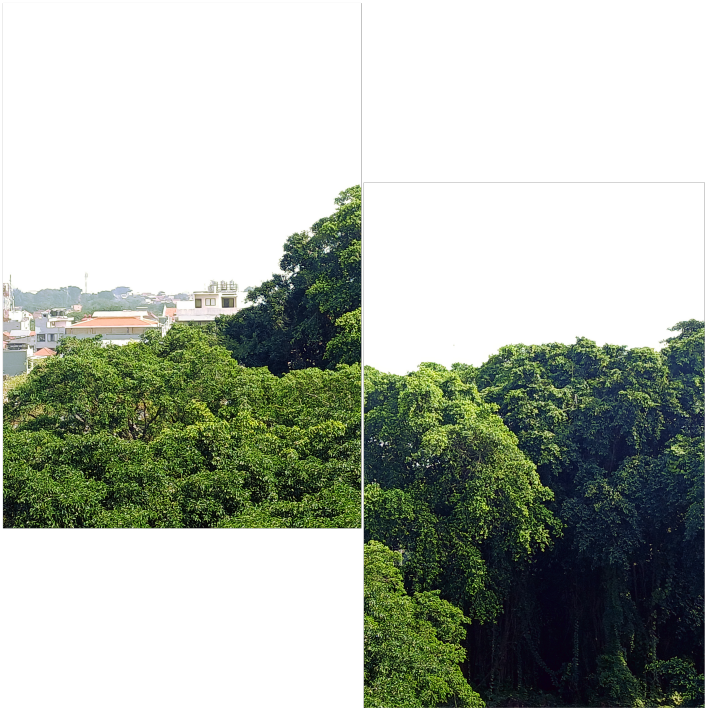

field recording by Karnivulgar
https://archive.org/details/karnivulgar-muted-forest-wonokromo

"Noise is not the absence of a signal—it is the sound of the system working exactly as intended."

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def-n networks.

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